



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER  
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

AMBASSADOR TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

**Inputs: Sixth session of the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law  
Contribution of the Sovereign Order of Malta Ambassador to monitor and combat  
trafficking in persons**

**Purpose:** To contribute to the agenda of the Sixth session of the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (Geneva, 16-17 November, 2026) which will focus on “Education for civic participation: empowering future generations, fostering knowledge and critical thinking.”

**Introduction**

For the Sovereign Order of Malta, education as a tool to prevent human rights violations and to foster long-term stability, development, and peace is a paramount issue that should stand at the forefront of this Forum's agenda. Also, it teaches respect for the dignity of every human being. Alongside this, it seems essential to highlight, within the Forum's agenda, the work carried out by faith-based organizations (FBOs) and, more broadly, by humanitarian organizations, particularly in the implementation of civic education programs for populations in developing countries and conflict zones.

**I. Education to Human Rights as a tool to prevent violence**

First, it is entirely relevant to highlight that human rights education plays a crucial role in preventing violence and future conflicts among populations. Indeed, human rights education can reduce violence by transforming individual perceptions, strengthening behavioral skills, and fostering a culture of mutual respect within society.<sup>1</sup> Human rights education helps establish common reference points. Human rights have been universally recognized since 1948, with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, followed by various conventions adopted over the ensuing decades. Educating communities on these concepts is fundamental to building a rule of law, where authorities are fully equipped to establish the necessary framework for resolving disputes without resorting to violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernath, T., Holland, T., & Martin, P. (1999). How can human rights education contribute to international peace building? *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.52214/cice.v2i1.11319>



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Education also helps reduce feelings of personal helplessness and build individuals' self-confidence. This in turn fosters attitudes of mutual support and trust toward the State as a regulator of daily life<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, human rights education encompasses the teaching of practical skills such as conflict resolution, communication, and how to respond to threats of violence. It also teaches individuals how to document violations and seek assistance from governmental or international agencies. Taken together, these skills help address social traumas and inter-group conflicts by promoting respect for others. By educating people about human rights, we directly tackle the patterns of marginalization that so often lie at the root of conflict.

As an empirical example, evidence shows that when groups of women learn about their rights, it not only increases their capacity for social advocacy, but also significantly reduces the levels of domestic violence in their personal lives<sup>3</sup>.

Finally, the use of interactive pedagogical methods, such as role-playing, allows learners to concretely experience the meaning of mutual respect and non-discrimination. These experiences are essential for building a society capable of upholding human rights and sustaining peace.

## II. The role of FBOs and humanitarian actors in education

Faith-based organizations and humanitarian organizations play an important role in education, particularly in teaching human rights among populations in need. Indeed, through their presence in the most remote areas, where the State sometimes struggles to operate, religious and humanitarian organizations forge very close ties with local communities. The social and physical infrastructure these organizations possess is often of a high standard, and places of worship along with other cultural and social centers serve as natural anchor points within communities, facilitating the implementation of educational programs<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Clarke, G., & Jennings, M. (2008). Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organisations: bridging the sacred and the secular. ResearchGate.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356528593\\_Development\\_Civil\\_Society\\_and\\_Faith-Based\\_Organisations\\_Bridging\\_the\\_Sacred\\_and\\_the\\_Secular](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356528593_Development_Civil_Society_and_Faith-Based_Organisations_Bridging_the_Sacred_and_the_Secular)



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Several field examples illustrate this: in Tanzania, religious communities, particularly Christian organizations, provided nearly 50% of national education, healthcare, and social protection in the late 1990s, despite receiving no support from the World Bank at the time. Today, religious organizations are considered as indispensable field partners, especially in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which encompass human rights education for local populations<sup>5</sup>.

Furthermore, religious organizations can play an even more crucial role insofar as they are able to translate human rights into the idioms of faith, thereby mobilizing local support in ways that secular agencies cannot always replicate.

The Sovereign Order of Malta has extensive experience in assisting local populations. Its centuries-old mission in service of the most vulnerable has enabled the Order to develop its humanitarian activities across nearly 120 countries worldwide, including in remote and particularly unstable areas. While the Order's national associations and its relief agency, Malteser International, have primarily focused on humanitarian and medical activities, they have in recent years sought to expand their scope toward broader projects aimed at the long-term development of local communities. In Lebanon, for instance, the Order of Malta's association promotes civic education activities to raise citizens' awareness of their rights. Moreover, just as recently, the Italian Civil Security Corps of the Order of Malta (CISOM) organised a week-long human rights training course in Mauritania for the Mauritanian civil protection service.

In its efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking, the Order of Malta organizes events in Geneva, New York, Rome, and Vienna, alongside online training sessions, webinars, and lectures at universities across France, Italy, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Looking ahead, the Order plans to launch a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in collaboration with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, the Pontifical Gregorian University, and the University of Nice.

Geneva, 13 May 2026

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid